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ABSTRACT

The history of higher education in the United States encompasses conflicting attitudes towards those in educational leadership roles: educational leaders should be well-trained academicians who somehow know how to manage, or they should be well-trained managers who somehow know how to be academic. However, community college educational administrators are neither one nor the other, but persons trained a bit in both areas who get caught in the debate not to determine purpose but in search of identity. The problem does not involve formal training as much as how management responsibilities should be fulfilled and the nature of the academic commitment. To that end, the behavioral context in which people function as leaders determines the success or failure of that leadership. This context involves leaders' self-knowledge, awareness of others, willingness to take risks, and capacity for self-confrontation. In addition, successful "anticipatory" management necessitates understanding the psychology of decision-making and the significance of the systemic approach, maintaining a balance between change and innovation and between strong leadership and delegation, providing honest adverse news as opposed to suspicious good news, making a clear short- and long-term mission statement, identifying success as well as failure, and getting things done. (TR)

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STUDIES IN POSSIBILITIES: ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

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" ... advice is what we ask for when we already know the answer but wish we didn't ... "

"When you do your homework, when you keep individuals informed who need to be apprised, when you operate from a sound data base, when you analyze and synthesize the information to arrive at sound planning or decision-making, it is difficult for your antagonists to argue very effectively against you. At the same time, you reinforce the large following of sympathizers and even perhaps wind up persuading some of the ambivalent contingency."*

It sounds good - like a description of a prudent and competent administrator. It may be used to fit an essentially "managerial" or "humanist" world. How realistically?

We have long passed the era of the 60's in which management decisions could be defined as "solution by addition" in a mind-set of growth, expansion and affluence.** We find ourselves at a "steady state" or an era of maximizing opportunities rather than carefully avoiding major errors requiring resourcefulness as distinct from bravado, what I like to call "anticipatory management"as distinct from "crisis management."

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* S. James Manilla, Address delivered to Midwest Health Council, March 18, 1978, Kansas City, Missouri

** Elmer Jagow, "The Human Resource - Our Key to Success," 57th Annual Meeting of Eastern Association of College & University Business Officers, November, 1976, Buck Hill Falls, Pennsylvania

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The limited history of higher education in this country encompasses at least two attitudes towards those in educational leadership roles:

1. Educational leaders are to be well-trained academicians who somehow know how to manage.
2. Educational leaders are to be well-trained managers who somehow know how to be academic.

These essentially antithetical approaches have been debated frequently and fruitlessly.

For community colleges, a more likely description of educational administration is that we are neither well-trained academicians nor well-trained managers. We are trained a bit in both; we have opted for one "style" or the other. We get caught up in the debate not to determine our purpose but in search for a determination of what we are - "identity." The issue does not turn on the formal training of those in educational leadership roles. It turns on the way in which the responsibilities of management are fulfilled and the nature of commitment to the academic. The context of behavior in which one functions as educational leader will determine the success or failure of that leadership. This context of behavior is likewise to be considered in the more comprehensive framework of the institution and the community.

The case for academic leadership is not to be made by arguing for recognition of the value of humanistic goals be it in the form of Plato's Republic (in which humanism appears strained), the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle (which I don't remember), or Aristotelian ethics (which I have successfully forgotten). No self-respecting educator would dare deny such values and only "vocational" educators would speak to their limitations. Rather, the case for academic leadership

rests in effective articulation of insight into what it means to be a whole, sensitive, significant human being with standards adequate for social as well as personal purposes. It rests with a spirit for life.

Management in the 70's and 80's needs, in my judgment, to at least reflect the following:

1. Understanding the psychology of decision-making and its blending with competence and a sense of timing.
2. Realization of the significance of a systemic approach: integrating significant data into a well-defined context.
3. Maintenance of a balance between change and innovation. (Effect changes that would not occur except for your efforts.)
4. Maintenance of a balance between strong leadership and effective delegation of accountability and responsibility (I abhor the notion of a management "team.")
5. Providing honest adverse news as preferred to suspicious good news. (Communication becomes candor, not just talk.)
6. Identification of success as well as failure - an effective accountability system. (A framework to demonstrate individual and institutional accomplishment as well as the lack thereof. A good leader provides a sense of moving ahead, of growth, of achievement with enthusiasm. Accountability models don't exist simply in order to fire people.)
7. Action orientation - getting things done. (A serious administrative pitfall we all attempt to avoid is that of working very hard to get nowhere.)
8. Providing a clear, short- and long-term statement of mission and purpose of an institution or that piece of it for which you are responsible.

There are, of course, other management criteria and eight (as compared to seven or three) is not a sacred number. These guidelines are reflective of an emphasis on the educational leader as concerned with people and processes. They do not address the issue of constituencies or publics such as those by Robert Bickford in the Community and Junior College Journal (April, 1978)* - such as boards, community, students, faculty, and media. They do not address Benjamin Wygal's "president as manipulator" nor George Vaughn's "president as mentor" in that same issue.** The criteria do not speak to the obvious required technical competencies of educational management such as knowledge of budgets, computers, collective bargaining, state formula funding, and legislation. Finally, they do not reflect the obvious reality that educational managers are humans with not always unlimited energy -- we do get tired.

II

I have claimed that the critical characteristic necessary for providing academic leadership is not academic but psychological - that the "context of behavior" of the educational leader as distinct from intellectual commitment is the critical ingredient for consideration. Perhaps a contrast by example will be helpful. Let's look at a dramatization of a "successful" context of behavior as distinct from an unsuccessful one. We have, ladies and gentlemen, the "Impossible Leader" as compared to the "Possible Leader."

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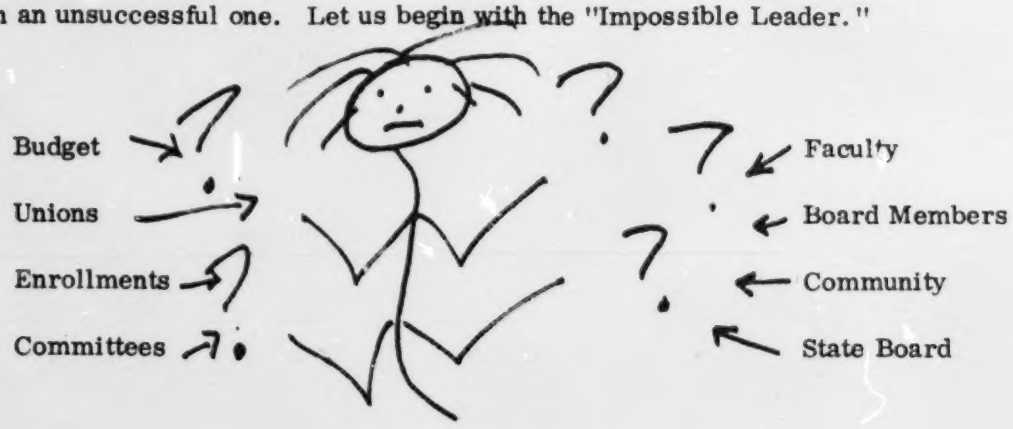
*Robert Bickford, "The President as Marketer," Community & Junior College Journal," Vol. 48, No. 7, April, 1978, pp. 14-16

**Community & Junior College Journal," Vol. 48, No. 7, April, 1978

It is unfortunately more difficult for me to speak to a successful context of behavior than an unsuccessful one. Let us begin with the "Impossible Leader."



Title:	Important
Sex:	Indeterminate
Age:	Old
Credentials:	Some doctorate or another
Experience:	Not to be confused with age
Condition:	Weary
Complications:	Be female, black, Chicano - i.e. - some combination of non-white, non-male

Not to be confused with the "impossible dream," our Impossible Leader is real and familiar. He or she leads or almost leads a medium-sized community college which calls itself comprehensive, is stymied in curriculum development, doesn't know what to do in staff development, has a recently-organized faculty, an over-active governing Board, and a less-than-informed State Board. The last person in this leadership role was outright fired, forced out, or has inappropriately (as it is euphemistically stated) "returned to faculty."

With declining enrollments and budget cuts have come dissatisfied staff, low morale, and an irate Board. Skill in "balancing" is not equal to the extremes to be balanced. Life is a " ... peculiar frenzy of chiefly useless activity."

Our Impossible Leader's energies have been wasted, his or her efforts have been beaten down by those very budgets, bargaining units and Boards which make up his or her environment. I submit that administrative efforts under these conditions are destructive of that intellect, initiative, analytic skill, synthetic skill, and aesthetic sensitivity on which we should draw. The eight criteria have been lost in the mire of constant pressure, tension, pettiness, incompetence, and anger that may make up most of our days. Consider how much of your time is spent in trivia or self-control.

We may provide many mythical solutions to our Impossible Leader's echoing problems. From the depths of institutional despair comes resiliance, forcefulness, and courage derived from an inner core of strength. With fantastic emotional reserves deriving mainly from frequent handball, racquetball, tennis, jogging, and/or meditation, our Leader can "get it all together" and with intellect, initiative, analytic, and synthetic skill and sensitivity "pull it out of the fire." Funding may improve, enrollments suddenly increase, a Board election is held Such "solutions" are mythical for two reasons: they depend on external change and they are unlikely.

What of the "Possible Leader?"

Title:	Important
Sex:	Indeterminate
Age:	Holding
Credentials:	Some doctorate or another
Experience:	Not to be confused with age
Condition:	Holding
Complications:	Same as "Impossible"

Our "Possible Leader" can be real. While impinged upon by the same forces, this leader can function effectively as described by our eight criteria. There is a limit to the destructiveness of trivia, to the pressure, tension, and need for control. This is clarity of mission and a realization of what is important for personal and professional success in this environment. The Possible Leader knows that he or she cannot be all things to all people, that honesty must be balanced by timing, that the heart of the educational enterprise is the development of "liberating vision ... human becoming ... the development of those essential human skills which constitute a full, competent, and responsible life... "*

The "Possible Leader" has tentatively mastered a "threatening opportunity." The difference between our two leaders derives not from their respective environments, credentials, or training, but from their respective approaches to what has been, is, and will be. The distinction is between those human beings with the capacity to

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*Lloyd Averill, "The Shape of the Liberal Arts," Address delivered to Kansas City Regional Council for Higher Education, Critical Issues in Higher Education, Kansas City, Missouri, January 21, 1978

" ... live life rather than be lived by it ...."* We are speaking of those who " ... struggle for coherence, for a compelling faith, for social vision, for an ethical position, for a sense of historical perspective."** The "Possible Leader" may be described as having "a capacity for zest, exuberance, and passion ... (who) does not cease to experience tension, anxiety, and psychic pain."*** Perhaps the strength of the "Possible Leader" may be summed up simply stating that the factors which overwhelm and produce ineffective reaction on the part of the "Impossible Leader" are simply absent in the "Possible Leader." There is, as Averill quotes Keniston, as certain "human wholeness" on the part of the "Possible Leader" which results in concern, commitment, and dedication which produces a vision of what life is all about and a basis on which to interact with various environments. It is not only the values one holds, but how one holds them. It is not the direction a leader provides, but the manner in which that direction is provided. The manner in which a leader's skills are integrated creates a basis for action and reaction and involves an institution and a community. We have too long been plagued with demands for accommodation, egalitarianism, flexibility, and constant change which we interpret to require the price of denial of our sense of mission and purpose. The context of behavior that makes the difference may be described as sensitive self-assertion or enlightened self-interest.

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*Lloyd Averill, "The Shape of the Liberal Arts."

**Robert Coles, "The Humanities & Human Dignity," Change, Vol. 10, No. 2, February, 1978, p. 9

***Lloyd Averill, "The Shape of the Liberal Arts."

While I imagine that there is some of the possible and impossible in all of us as leaders, a fundamental test of our capacity as academic leaders rests on our self-knowledge, awareness of others, and willingness to take risks. These qualities in turn rest on our capacity for self-confrontation. The fate of our institutions rests on our individual and unique capacities.

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